

HONORING OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS: OUR 2001 VOLUNTEER AWARD WINNERS



BLM's 2001 "Making a Difference" National Volunteer Award winners pose with Director Kathleen Clarke at the award ceremony. Pictured (left to right) are: Leon Lesicka, LaVelle Lesicka, Steve Peerman, Pete Fish, Clarke, Ron Pownall, Helene Aarons, Bill Cannon, Carol Pownall, Rose Foster, Pat Williams, Kay Patteson, Maggie Fugate-Swasey, Randy Paiment, Chuck Williams, and Bob Bower.

On May 30, 2002, BLM's annual "Making A Difference" National Volunteer Awards Ceremony was held in Washington, DC. Nine outstanding BLM volunteers (six individuals, two couples, and one organization) and three exceptional BLM employees were honored. The "Making A Difference" awards recognize exemplary volunteer contributions made in the year 2001 on behalf of the public lands.

The 2001 award winners represented a particularly broad cross-section of BLM program areas. Their work included protecting archaeological and paleontological resources, promoting the Adopt-A-Horse Program, restoring rivers and desert habitat, protecting caves, living on-site to manage a recreation area, and collectively supervising thousands of additional volunteers in these projects.

BLM Director Kathleen Clarke and BLM Assistant Director for Communications Larry Finfer presented the awards at the ceremony, which was held in the South Penthouse/Terrace of the Main Interior Building in Washington. “Your work truly is helping the BLM realize President Bush’s goal for every American to give an individual commitment of time, heart, and effort in service to America,” said BLM Director Kathleen Clarke. “You are excellent ambassadors for the thousands of volunteers who work for our public lands every day. As the populations surrounding our public lands grow, volunteer assistance becomes ever more critical for our agency. We are truly grateful to all of the volunteers who serve BLM each year.”

These winners represent only a small fraction of the exceptional contributions that are being made every day by thousands of people on public lands throughout the country. Each year, on average, volunteers collectively donate more than 1 million hours to the agency, the equivalent of almost 600 work years. In Fiscal Year 2001, the value of this work was nearly \$18 million. In many instances, volunteers serve as BLM’s first point of contact with the public, playing an important ambassadorial role for the agency. In some remote areas, campgrounds and other recreation sites would be closed were it

not for volunteer assistance. Additionally, volunteers play an increasingly important role for the agency as growing populations in the West have placed increased demands on the public lands.

A national panel of BLM and partner organization representatives selected the winners from nominations submitted by BLM State Offices and National Centers. Award recipients are chosen for “Making a Difference” in management and conservation of the public lands and their resources.

BLM initiated its “Making a Difference” National Awards in 1995, holding its first recognition ceremony in 1996. This year’s observance marked the seventh annual presentation of these awards.



In an attempt to reduce erosion and prevent illegal off-highway vehicle travel in the Juniper Flats burned area near Barstow, California, volunteers “planted” dead tree limbs and brush in the wide open areas—a technique called “vertical mulching.”

VOLUNTEER AWARD RECIPIENTS

ROBERT (BOB) BOWER

*BLM Field Office,
Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Over the past 6 years as a volunteer with BLM's Albuquerque Field Office, Bob Bower has directed a highly motivated team of volunteers in protecting archaeological resources, contributing over 4,100 hours of his own time during that period. Working under the guidance of a BLM archaeologist, Bob's group has collected data, conducted regular field patrols, monitored public visitation, and raised public awareness about conserving and protecting public lands and resources. In 2001, the group took on a large project to survey and document the hundreds of prehistoric sites that are known to exist in the Mesa Portales area of north-central New Mexico. The data collected helps BLM to manage and protect the sites, is made available to academic researchers, and is entered into the State of New Mexico's Laboratory of Anthropology data base. As of the end of 2001, over 300 archaeological sites had been located, and precise Global Positioning System locations and descriptive information had been compiled. Bob submits weekly reports on the project to permanently record its progress. Early comments received from members of the academic community have already confirmed the considerable value of this work in enhancing the understanding of the great prehistoric cultures of the area. The inventory also provides baseline documentation

for use in prosecuting site vandals and artifact thieves in these vulnerable and important locations.

PETE FISH

BLM Field Office, Ridgecrest, California

In 1995, in coordination with BLM's Ridgecrest Field Office, Pete Fish initiated the planning and coordination of a major volunteer effort to restore California's Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Rapid vegetative growth along the trail had made several segments nearly impassable to hikers and equestrians, and limited BLM funding did not permit adequate annual maintenance. In 1996, Pete spearheaded his first 12-day trail project, which involved 20 volunteers who put in nearly 1,000 hours of labor; similar volunteer projects followed in the fall of that year, the spring and fall of 1997, and at least twice each year thereafter. These projects resulted in the clearing of vegetation, removal of fallen trees from the trail, trail tread repair, and drainage improvement. The BLM estimates that Pete and his volunteer "Trail Gorillas" have donated over 8,000 hours of their time, with an estimated labor value of more than \$185,000. Pete's dedication to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail has contributed greatly toward preserving this treasure for the benefit of future generations.

LEON LESICKA

BLM Field Office, El Centro, California

For more than 20 years, Leon Lesicka has been in the forefront of a grassroots movement to improve and maintain California Desert

wildlife habitat in Riverside and Imperial Counties. Initially, he and his wife, LaVelle, founded Desert Wildlife Unlimited (DWU) to address the problem of accidental drowning of deer in water transport canals. The focus of DWU soon expanded to address enhancement of desert bighorn sheep and mule deer habitat, including improvement of water sources and reduction of the impacts of wild burros, tamarisk encroachment, and human disturbance. The DWU also champions a wide variety of other desert species, and members work closely with government agencies, including BLM, on a broad array of conservation projects. In addition to countless hours of field work, Leon has been instrumental in garnering political support at all levels for conservation efforts on public lands in southern California. In 1995, California Representative Duncan Hunter presented the Theodore Roosevelt Award to Leon for his work in wildlife conservation, and in July 2001, the *San Diego Union Tribune* chronicled his contributions under the headline, “The Real Desert Protectors.”

RANDY PAIMENT

*Samoa Dunes Recreation Area,
Arcata, California*

Randy Paiment volunteers as BLM’s resident caretaker at the Samoa Dunes Recreation Area, a very popular, 300-acre site located on California’s Samoa Peninsula near the entrance to Humboldt Bay. Approximately 175,000 visitors travel to the area each year; during the summer months, visitation is as

high as 5,000 people per week. Randy lives on-site, and is responsible for entrance gate control, visitor reception, dissemination of information, facilities maintenance and repair, and coordination of search and rescue operations with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Humboldt County Sheriff’s Department. Randy is often called upon to provide assistance during emergency situations, and is always willing to help others. He has contributed approximately 3,000 hours of his time within a period of less than 3 years. The condition of Samoa Dunes has been significantly enhanced by Randy’s personal attention and professionalism.

KAY PATTESON

BLM Field Office, Salem, Oregon

Kay Patteson helped to establish her organization, Molalla RiverWatch (MRW), in 1992 to preserve and restore the flora, fauna, and water quality of the Molalla River and its tributaries on BLM public lands near Portland, Oregon. Concerned about threats to the river from unsightly dumps along its banks and even in the river itself, Kay and her organization’s members have committed themselves to promoting respect and understanding of the Molalla River watershed through education and conservation activities. Kay’s direct support has facilitated the efforts of more than 550 volunteers, who work with BLM staff to organize and conduct frequent site clean-up and maintenance events. Kay has also been instrumental in implementing a science-based educational outreach program for local middle school teachers and students,

who regularly visit the site's Aquilla Vista Educational Research Area for both outdoor learning opportunities and hands-on site improvement work. The Molalla RiverWatch was honored by the Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism (SOLV) organization for its sponsorship of major river cleanups, which have resulted in the removal of hundreds of tons of trash and debris from the Molalla watershed.

RON AND CAROL POWNALL

BLM Field Office, Jackson, Mississippi

Ron and Carol Pownall are entering their 4th year as volunteers with BLM's Adopt-a-Horse Program at the Jackson (Mississippi) Field Office. Since adopting their first mustang several years ago, the Pownalls have participated in every BLM adoption event in the State of Mississippi and have also traveled—adopted horses in tow—to neighboring states to help out. They have spent many hours working at adoption information booths, inspecting trailers, participating in adopter education seminars, and assisting in any other way that has been required. Ron and Carol have also been involved in special horse-related projects, including the planning and filming of an episode of the Animal Planet cable TV show, "A Pet Story." In late 2001, a film crew joined the Pownalls at a Jackson adoption, where the couple took home a photogenic 2-year-old stallion. The crew then followed the newcomer's progress with his adopted family for one whole week-end. Ron and Carol were the perfect on-air spokespersons for horse adoption. Thanks to

their enthusiasm for America's wild horses, the frequently re-run Animal Planet show has become a tremendous promotional and outreach tool for BLM's Adopt-a-Horse Program.

MARGARET (MAGGIE) FUGATE-SWASEY

BLM Field Office, Price, Utah

Both as a volunteer and as an Emery County, Utah, employee, Maggie Fugate-Swasey has been closely involved in BLM management efforts to resolve conflicts among various users of public lands administered by the Price Field Office. For the last 3 years, Maggie has also been a driving force behind enthusiastic volunteer participation in the BLM-sponsored National Public Lands Day (NPLD) events in the Price area. In 2001, for example, NPLD projects at the Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry National Natural Landmark resulted in the construction of a 620-foot concrete walkway, 400 feet of post-and-pole fencing to protect fossil resources, and considerable assistance to BLM paleontologists and geologists who are researching the Cleveland-Lloyd quarry. Maggie was the lead organizer for the entire event; she even recorded it on videotape and in photographs, set up a dinner for all participants, and arranged for the release of two rehabilitated golden eagles at day's end as a tribute to those who lost their lives on September 11. Maggie also serves as a non-federal member of BLM's Volunteer Program Adjunct Team, which acts as a field advisory committee to BLM's National Volunteer Program office in Washington, DC.

CHUCK AND PAT WILLIAMS

*Red Rock National Conservation Area,
Las Vegas, Nevada*

Since Chuck and Pat Williams first volunteered at BLM's Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA) in Nevada in early 1999, they have been a driving force within the highly effective Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FORRC) organization. Both began their tenures as members of the FORRC Natural Resources Committee. Within a year, Pat became the Membership Chair; today, she works for the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association and is the manager of the Visitor Center Book Store. Chuck became the President of FORRC in 2000, and has served in that position with enthusiasm, dedication, and heart—to many, he's the "best president the organization has ever had." Together, Chuck and Pat have increased financial support for Red Rock, enabling fulfillment of mission goals; coordinated community awareness events, such as festivals and an art contest; issued grants to partner groups and scholarships to schools; implemented educational initiatives, including school science kits and children's programs; improved the Visitor Center; instituted projects to monitor, protect, and rehabilitate the NCA's natural and cultural resources; and improved management of Red Rock's volunteer workforce of more than 500 members. The Williamses have also helped to enhance dialogue between the BLM and Red Rock

users, and have even shared their expertise with start-up "friends" groups at other BLM sites, such as Nevada's Black Rock Desert. As a result of their innovations and hard work, it is estimated that Chuck and Pat saved BLM \$270,000 in 2001 alone.

SOUTHWEST REGION, NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BLM Field Office, Carlsbad, New Mexico

For 40 years, members of the Southwest Region (SWR) have been consistent and reliable volunteers for BLM cave management and protection projects in southern New Mexico. This region boasts some 1,000 caves, including famous Lechuguilla Cave, one of the longest and deepest in the world. In 1985, BLM entered into a formal agreement with SWR to allow for comprehensive and long-term cave management activities. The SWR members have also helped BLM to educate public lands visitors about caves as unique natural and recreational resources, and have contributed their expertise to cave inventory and mapping, photomonitoring, gate construction and installation, recreational development, and visitor use analysis. In addition, the SWR has discovered and surveyed more than 200 caves on BLM lands in east-central and southeast New Mexico. Many of these newly identified caves are in developing oil and gas fields; knowledge of cave locations will enable BLM to protect groundwater and fragile cave resources as wells are drilled.

BLM EMPLOYEE AWARD RECIPIENTS

HELENE AARONS

*BLM Volunteer Coordinator,
Colorado State Office*

Faced with limited availability of internal funding for expansion of BLM-Colorado's volunteer program, long-time State Volunteer Coordinator Helene Aarons took a new approach. Applying the natural resources concept of ecosystem management, she began developing regional, public/private partnerships to establish regional "volunteer centers." The community-based centers are now cutting-edge models for public lands volunteer management, enabling effective, efficient program management through reduction of duplicative efforts and pooling of financial and labor resources. Administrative boundaries among federal, state, and county land management agencies are no longer viewed as insurmountable obstacles, community organizations are heavily involved as partners, and the regional volunteer cadres are dedicated to all public lands, rather than those of any one agency. Helene's innovative vision has resulted in a volunteer management approach that allows the greatest number of volunteers to be utilized and projects to be completed, while also instilling a strong sense of shared stewardship among volunteers and local community members.

WILLIAM J. (BILL) CANNON

BLM Archaeologist, Lakeview, Oregon

Over the past 15 years, BLM-Lakeview (Oregon) archaeologist Bill Cannon has developed a unique, cost-efficient, and mutually beneficial system of using individual and university volunteers to complete archaeological work on public lands. Both individual student volunteers, in most cases graduate students in archaeology or paleontology, and university field school participants have conducted professional archaeological surveys, site tests, evaluations, and salvage activities on BLM lands. In some cases, students have even completed National Register nominations for important sites. Students often use the completed work as a basis for master's theses and doctoral dissertations; to date, 38 students have completed advanced degrees thanks to work arranged by Bill Cannon. In fact, some of Bill's former students found their experiences so rewarding that they now hold positions with federal agencies. In addition, Bill has worked with the Girl Scouts and other youth organizations, and is currently working with Oregon's High Desert Museum on teacher in-service programs related to cultural resources. That museum recently awarded Bill the Earle A. Chile Award for excellence in the preservation of natural, archaeological, and historical resources.

ROSE FOSTER

*BLM Volunteer Coordinator,
Barstow, California*

In her capacity as the Volunteer Coordinator for the Barstow (California) Field Office, Rose Foster has recruited more than 1,200 public lands volunteers, who have contributed over 15,000 hours of time in improving recreation facilities, strengthening partnerships, and generally enhancing the health and safety of BLM public lands. In 2001, Rose organized volunteers for a wide variety of projects, including removal of 173 tons of trash from illegal dumpsites at off-highway vehicle areas; placement of 5 miles of wilderness

boundary signs along a non-wilderness corridor; improvement of hiking trails and campground facilities; and even assistance with charity “poker runs” on BLM lands to benefit community non-profit groups. Rose also regularly serves as a site coordinator for the Barstow Field Office’s annual National Public Lands Day work event, which requires months of planning, volunteer recruitment, promotion, and just plain physical hard work. As a member of the BLM’s Volunteer Program Adjunct Team, a field advisory committee to BLM’s National Volunteer Program office, Rose has provided training to BLM Volunteer Coordinators in California and Colorado.



Volunteering and education often go hand-in-hand. University professor and researcher Elaine Major shows young Gabriella Brune how to identify aquatic insects, key indicators of stream health.